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The World Health Organization (WHO) presents its compliments to Member States and has the honour to request them to submit weekly mortality data related to COVID-19 in the context of the public health emergency.

As the world goes through a challenging time during the global pandemic of COVID-19, it is critical that we gather as much evidence as possible to understand the impact of the disease to support preparedness and response, and design policies and research. In the context of the public health emergency, WHO would like to inform Member States that it is embarking on a weekly collection of data on deaths related to COVID-19 from information gathered from medical certificates of the cause of death from Member States' civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems.

As several countries have now pointed out, during the current pandemic, deaths in health-facilities are often the first to be counted and reported to WHO by Member States' surveillance systems, leaving out deaths in the community, elderly care facilities, etc. This underestimates the real impact of the pandemic. Obtaining timely, accurate and complete weekly mortality statistics from CRVS systems will help show the true impact of COVID-19 on mortality across countries as well as understand the sex and age patterns in these deaths.

Member States will be requested to submit the mortality data aggregated by sex, age, cause of death as stated in the death certificate on a designated WHO web portal with secure access. These data would enable more precise information on a subset (certified deaths) of all COVID-19 deaths, in complement to the weekly global surveillance for COVID-19 cases and deaths already in place¹. Each Member State will only be able to upload, revise and view its own data submission. WHO will apply its formal and comprehensive policy for securely managing the data and information including information security, technical and physical data security, data access and retention procedures, and confidentiality arrangements in the context of this public health emergency. WHO understands that some weekly data may be provisional at the time of submission. Member States will have the opportunity to revise the provisional data in any subsequent weekly data submissions.

The World Health Organization would appreciate it if Member States could provide it as soon as possible (**mail to: mortality@who.int**) with the names, titles and email addresses of the designated staff that would submit the information on the WHO web portal in order to allow the creation of secure login credentials. Access to the web portal would be restricted to a maximum of three designated persons by each Member State.

The World Health Organization avails itself of this opportunity to renew to Member States the assurance of its highest consideration.

GENEVA, 22 June 2020

¹ <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/surveillance-and-case-definitions>.